



NZFGW News

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I am currently a third year PhD student at the University of Waikato. My research investigates everyday mundane experiences of former Bhutanese refugees mostly women and girls in New Zealand. I am particularly interested in studying how these groups create a sense of home in New Zealand through their everyday activities.



These former Bhutanese refugee women and girls were resettled in Christchurch, Nelson, Palmerston North and Auckland since 2008 under the New Zealand refugee quota. According to the UNHCR Nepal, as of 30th June 2016, 104,009 Bhutanese refugees from Nepal have been resettled in eight countries. New Zealand has resettled 1,009 making New Zealand the fourth largest hosting country. The interviews were conducted in Nepali, then have been translated to English.

It is worth noting that the group has a very distinct social and cultural values, language and eating habits. I recruited 48 participants, including five men, from Auckland, Christchurch, Palmerston North and Nelson between February and November 2015. These participants differ in their age (12-85), education (from university degree to never been in a formal educational institution prior to resettlement in New Zealand), and religious beliefs. All of these refugees have been through six-week orientation programme in the Mangere refugee resettlement centre in Auckland as well as English language program.

It is very important to consider that there is a hybrid of Nepali speaking Bhutanese generations living in New Zealand- the generation of parents (who prefer to identify as either Nepalese or Bhutanese or both in some cases) and the young generation (who prefer to identify as

Nepalese/Bhutanese-New Zealander). Each group faces different challenges which I will discuss briefly tensions and challenges for women and girls in particular:

- My research also shows that inter-generational conflict within the family is being created by lingual assimilation. Often the older generation wants family members to speak Nepali 'at home' while the younger generation is using English as their common language to communicate with others. Most of the older generation in this study, however, felt 'out of place' and that they do not belong or fit in New Zealand because they are unable to understand the English language well.
- The sexual desire and practices of young Nepalese/Bhutanese-New Zealander women are also considered to be creating an inter-generational conflict 'at home' and in wider communities. There is significant parental worry when there are different opinions around sexual beliefs and practices among family members, particularly daughters. Parents in this study, especially mothers, expressed their fears that their adolescent daughters might follow the New Zealand practice of 'defacto' relationships or 'living together' which is deemed unacceptable among the Bhutanese community. The expectation is that young women must retain their virginity prior to marriage. Sex outside marriage among these young women is also deemed unacceptable. This might prompt inter-generational tensions when the traditonal beliefs related to sexual desire and practices are challenged, especially by women, when this is considered a subject of silence.
- A few girls especially those aged between 12-15, outlined tensions and conflicts 'at home' in relation to what they understand to be harsh and rigorous family practices based on protective roles and decision-making processes put in place by their parents. Some of this group of respondents felt these family practices restricted their mobility during certain times and in certain spaces. Boys and young men, however, are more likely to be allowed certain freedoms, such as going out with friends to clubs and parties.

The guest editorial has kindly been provided by Sunita Basnet, PhD candidate at Waikato University. Sunita is a highly motivated international student from Nepal with a particular interest in Bhutanese Refugee populations living in New Zealand. The findings above are only a brief snapshot from her thesis which aims to uncover some of the everyday geographies of home and belonging among Bhutanese Refugee populations in New Zealand.

CEDAW Report

New Zealand's eighth official periodic report on the United Nations Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is now available on the Ministry for Women's website at: <http://women.govt.nz/documents/cedaw-eighth-periodic-report-government-new-zealand-2016>